# THE APPROPRIATE NAME IN PETRONIUS

BY

GAYLIA MYRNA GOODE
A.B., Eureka College, 1935
A.M., University of Illinois, 1936

AN ABSTRACT OF A THESIS
SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY
IN CLASSICS IN THE GRADUATE SCHOOL OF
THE UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS, 1938

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An "appropriate" name is one which suggests the characteristic features, or an outstanding feature of the character or of the role of a particular person, regarded as a type or as an individual. There is trustworthy evidence in Aristotle's *Poetics,* 9, in a letter of Pliny the Younger (6, 21), and in the commentary of Donatus (on *Andria* 26) attesting the existence of a recognized literary tradition which required comic playwrights to employ names appropriate to the characters. Donatus gives the very sensible and cogent reason for such a requirement, namely, that it would be ridiculous for an author who invents the details of his own plots to give deliberately to his characters names unsuitable (*incongruum*) to their respective roles. And it is equally reasonable to expect that Petronius, author of the earliest extant prose fiction, who is observed to be careful in all other details of literary artistry, varying the everyday idiom to suit the individual who speaks it, varying the language of Trimalchio sober and Trimalchio drunk,—it is equally reasonable to expect that he will be careful in the matter of names, so that they will be appropriate without being either entirely colorless or extremely bizarre. In view of the fact that the *Satyricon* is realistic, the task of Petronius in this matter was doubly hard. He could not invent names (which would have been an easier thing to do), but he must find appropriate designations largely from those actually in use.

That Petronius did exercise considerable care in the selection of personal names, choosing a few of them, at least, for ironical effects is no new idea. Almost every scholar who has written anything at all on the subject of the *Satyricon* has made some comment on one or more of the designations, or has echoed the findings and opinions of other scholars. However, in no case, have all the characters been studied carefully to determine their individual characteristics, nor have reasons for the selection of all the personal names been suggested. It has been my purpose, therefore, building on the work already done, to determine as far as possible the traits in a character which identify him with a broad class in society and those which differentiate him as an

individual member of the class; and then to discover what appropriateness his name bears to his role. In regard to the latter aim, the significance of the name will depend largely on what it might be expected to suggest to the Roman readers in the time of Petronius. And this will not necessarily correspond to the precise etymological meaning of the name, for both Greeks and Romans very naturally associated the puns that could be made upon it with the etymology of a designation (see McCartney, Fordyce).

All the names in Petronius may be said to bear the proper type significance, such as Gaius Pompeius Trimalchio Maecenatianus, Gaius Julius Proculus, Gaius Pompeius Diogenes, all freedmen; Cairo, Carpus, Corax, Stichus (traditional slave names), slaves; Tryphaena, Psyche, Circe, Doris, Pannychis (traditionally hetaera names), all appearing only in connection with amatory adventures. Most of them possess, in addition to type significance, an appropriateness to the individual: Trimalchio, Carpus, Diogenes, Circe, Giton, Primigenius, etc. Some are appropriate by their very inappropriateness: Eumolpus, Ascyltos, Agamemnon, Glyco. A few characters, who may be said to have no particular qualities stressed, are given designations fitting to their place in the general scheme of society: Agatho, Doris, Gaius. In a few instances the appropriateness of the name is actually explained in the *Satyricon* itself (Daedalus, Carpus), or is distinctly implied (Dionysus, Ascyltos). Occasionally the designation really adds to the concept of a character and puts him in a humorous or ironical light, as in the case of Eumolpus, Agamemnon, Polyaenos, and Glyco.

In general, Petronius has drawn upon everyday life for the designations he chooses, so that, although they are quite appropriate to the individual, they contribute as well to the realism of the *Satyricon.* When he has not drawn upon everyday life he has availed himself of names from Greek and Roman Comedy (which were no doubt originally drawn from life) and from Homer. As examples of the former come chiefly the slave and hetaera designations. From the latter source come Agamemnon, Menelaus, Circe, and Polyaenus (not, however, a proper noun in the *Odyssey* but merely an appellation). Petronius draws on the names of Epic chiefly for ironical effect. Circe comes closest to

living up to her role in the *Odyssey,* but her power actually to put a charm upon men and turn them into beasts is now no more than the conventional sex appeal of a loose woman.

That the *Satyricon* belongs in the genre of "romance" is substantiated in part I think by the name of its principal character. Encolpius is the only individual of whom we can assert with any degree of certainty that he appears in the story from beginning to end. Though an accomplished critic of literature and art (1-2; 83), this side of his character is only an overtone to the main theme of the narrative, for he is employed in such a capacity merely as a mouthpiece to express the author's own personal opinions. His name hints at his role only in his amatory adventures, which in turn get him into still other scrapes, pursued as he is by the *ira Priapi,* which furnishes the efficient motif of the *Satyricon.*

Summing up the general results of a detailed study of the characters in the *Satyricon* and their designations, we arrive at the following conclusion: Except for the two names Ascyltos and Trimalchio (the latter really only an intensive form of Malchio, in current usage), Petronius has drawn on designations from everyday life, or on names associated with a traditional character or type of character in Comedy or Epic, in the latter case, largely for ironical effect. In every instance where we clearly understand the designation as well as the role and the character, there is a special aptness in the choice, with respect to social position, or individual characteristics, or both. And, since, in the majority of instances, appropriateness is clearly sought and secured, the one or two apparent exceptions are to be ascribed to our ignorance of many details and aspects of classical antiquity, and in particular of the life and thought of people at this relatively low level of conduct and taste.

## VITA

Gaylia Myrna Goode was born at Hartsburg, Illinois, July 24, 1914. She was graduated from the Hartsburg Community High School in 1931, from Eureka College, Eureka, Illinois, in June, 1935, with the A.B. degree, *summa cum laude,* from the University of Illinois, June, 1936, with the A.M. degree. In 1935-36 she was a Scholar in the Classics at the University of Illinois, and a Fellow in the Classics during the years 1936-37 and 1937-38.

While a graduate student she studied with Professors H. N. Hillebrand, B. E. Perry, H. V. Canter, and W. A. Oldfather. To Professor Oldfather, at whose suggestion this study was undertaken, she expresses her especial gratitude.

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